

Don Pedro Fornells House
62 Spanish Street
St. Augustine
St. Johns County
Florida

HABS No. FLA-137
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

DON PEDRO FORNELLS HOUSE

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Address: 62 Spanish Street, at Hypolita Street, St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida.

Present Owner and Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Eugene Williams, III, 62 Spanish Street, St. Augustine, Florida.

Present Use: Residence and Gun Shop.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The following account for the Fornells House was published in the July, 1963 (No. 48) issue of the St. Augustine Historical Society's Newsletter, El Escribano (pp. 8-14):

"This property was purchased by the St. Augustine Historical Society in 1952 when the house was in danger of demolition. Inspection indicated it to be a fine example of design and construction used in Saint Augustine in the early 1800's. It is a two story coquina block structure with a hip roof, almost square in design, a typical home of an ordinary family at the beginning of the 19th century. It was recently sold to Mr. and Mrs. Williams, the present occupants.

While the Juan Jose de la Puente map of January 22, 1764, shows a wooden house on this site (Block I - No. 121), by 1788, the Mariano de la Roque map shows the corner to be vacant (Block 16, - No. 124).

On January 9, 1800, Pedro Fornells, a native of Ciudadela in the Island of Menorca, petitioned the Spanish Crown for a grant of the lot which was part of the kitchen garden of the Dragoon Barracks (Block 18 - No. 153, Quesada List, 1790) measuring 22 varas on the two fronts East-West and 92 varas in depth, North-South. This request was granted on January 22, 1800. (Manuscripts in Field Note Room of Department of Agriculture, Tallahassee, Bundle No. 320, Document No. 95)

Sometime after 1800, after this grant was confirmed, Pedro Fornells built a house on this site. Fornells died unexpectedly on August 1, 1807, without having made a will.

However, an inventory of his properties was made, and the house on Spanish Street appears, described as (Translation):

One masonry house with its corresponding Lot located on the Street of the Dragoon Barracks, said barracks bounding it on the south.

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With respect to the carpentry work (translation)
For one staircase
For six doors and seven windows with glass panes
For the floor
For one corner cupboard
For the roof of the house with its shed
For one wooden partition
For the -----(illegible)

Kitchen

For (2?) doors and 2 windows
For the floor
For a corner cupboard
For the roof
For a privy
For 3 doors of the fence
For the fences.
For 93 orange trees planted in rows
For 103 small orange trees
For --- fig trees and 5 peach trees
For 11 peach trees and a grape arbor.

With respect to the masonry work:

For 50? varas of masonry on the East
For 30 varas of masonry on the North
For 50 varas of masonry on the West
For 30 varas of masonry on the South
For 20 varas of masonry on the west side of the dining room
For 9 varas of masonry on the north side of the dining room
For 9 varas of masonry on the south side of the dining room
For 70 sq. varas of masonry of the house and dining room
For 40 sq. varas of foundation of house and dining room
For 9 varas of masonry foundation of the partition, the thickness of a brick
For 10 cubic varas of masonry of the chimney (citaron)
For 28? varas of masonry of the north side of the kitchen de havitacion
For 19 varas of masonry of the west wall interior
For 28 varas of masonry of the south wall
For 19 varas of masonry of the east wall
For ? varas of foundation of the partition (citaron)
For ? cubic varas of the chimney
For 48 sq. varas of tabby (hormigon) floor of said kitchen
For 24 varas of foundation of said kitchen
30? varas of masonry fence on the north
(The East Florida Papers - Testamentary Proceedings on the death of
Pedro Fornells - SAHS Reel No. 9 - Document No. 8)

On February 4, 1820, Fornells' widow, Mariana Tudorina, made a will
in which the following statement describing the house appears: (Trans-
lation, page 2.)

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I declare as my present estate one house of masonry with its corresponding lot and trees, which is the house where I now live, located on the Calle de los Cuarteles de Dragones (Dragon Barracks Street, now known as Spanish Street) bounded on the South with said barracks, on the north with the cross street which leads to the Marina (Hypolita Street), on the East with the said Street of the Barracks and on the West with the street that leads to the Cienaga (now Cordova Street). Said house built by my deceased last husband Fornells, but at the time of his death said house was not of enough value to reimburse my dowry, and pay the debts that he had contracted, and in the many years since his death I have increased its value with my industry and with the orange grove that is cultivated. (East Florida Spanish Papers - Testamentary Proceedings on the Death of Mariana Tudorina - Box 54-59 SAHS Reel No. 13, Document 19)

Fornells' wife died on August 3, 1820, and in the probate proceedings her properties were appraised: (Translation)

<u>Masonry</u>	<u>Pesos</u>
One masonry house 112 sq. varas on the East wall @ 12 reales per vara	168
112 sq. varas on the West wall @ same	168
126 varas on the North @ 12 reales	189
64 sq. varas on the dining room wall at 12 reales	96
260 sq. varas of the kitchen - North-South @ 8 reales	260
130 sq. varas of the kitchen - East-West @ 8 reales	130
85 varas of wall between the house and kitchen @ 8 reales	85
296 sq. varas of masonry floor of the house, corridor and kitchen @ 3 reales	111
1840 sq. varas of house and lot @ 2 reales	1160

<u>Carpentry</u>	
For the roof, frame, <u>sintas</u> (ornamental trim) y <u>clabos</u> (nails)	102
Floor of boards, wood, nails and rafters	58
A wooden partition with its <u>varas</u> (<u>vasar</u> ?) y <u>cornisas</u> (rod? shelf?) and cornices	24
One cupboard with 20 glass panes	13
One glass door of 11 glass panes, its joist and iron work	24
One ladder	22
One glass window with 30 glass panes	12
8 windows with their frames and iron work	40
4 doors with their frames and iron work	20
1 cupboard with its glass door	10
1 door crossing to the dining room, frame and iron work	2

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Kitchen

For the roof	32
4 doors and 4 windows with their frames and iron work	29
Wooden floor	

One fence of split wooden pales and one <u>tinglado</u> (shed) with 2 doors	10
One old wooden fence with its posts and nails	21

Grove

60 orange trees @ 8 pesos	480
67 sour orange trees at 1 peso	67
Peaches and plums	4
A Grape arbor	5

Mrs. Fornells had no children by Pedro, but she had a daughter by her first husband, Pedro Porcila, and two sons and a daughter by her second marriage to Marcos Andreu. She left her estate to her four children to be divided in equal shares. In the disposition, by agreement between them, Marcos and Antonia Andreu received the house, and the other heirs were reimbursed for their portions. Thus the title became vested in Marcos and Antonia Andreu.

Subsequent owners of the property were Francisco P. Sanchez, Gabriel W. Perpall, Barbara Pacetti, Philip Solana, Burton Masters, **Earl L. Masters, Edwin L. Fleming, E. A. Rushton, Luis Gottlieb, from whom the St. Augustine Historical Society purchased it in 1952.

**During the many years of ownership by Mr. Burton Masters, this was the only place in town where one could buy real Minorcan food. Affectionately known as "Uncle Bertie", Mr. Masters was skilled in the fine art of preparing such delicacies as Shrimp Pilau, Gopher Stew and Clam Chowder. He had entered the restaurant business on St. George Street in 1895, at a location in back of a saloon, and although he kept open from 6 AM until midnight (the same hours as the saloon) there just weren't many customers. Despite the fact that he didn't have to pay any rent, it was a tough struggle. Uncle Bertie discovered that he could buy a two-pound rooster for a quarter, a string of roe mullet for the same, so he specialized in half a fried chicken or broiled muller [sic] with bread and coffee, for which the customer paid 25¢.

Business finally picked up, so he moved, and after a few years became established at the corner of Hypolita and Spanish Streets, where he stayed for almost 30 years. The business that he bought for \$150 sold many years later for several thousand dollars (St. Augustine Record, "the Castillo Sentry", May 30, 31, June 1, 1948).

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In 1952, when the St. Augustine Historical Society purchased the property the old coquina house was in danger of demolition. Inspection indicated it to be a fine example of design and construction used in St. Augustine in the early 1800's, althou [sic] additions made by recent owners had destroyed to a great extent the beauty and integrity of the old house.

Treatment was mcrely an extension of museum policy, in that the house would continue to be a part of a living community, rather than assuming the static role of a ruin. The following recommendations were followed:

Demolition

- (1) Everything attached to the West elevation with exception of one story coquina wall and concrete floor. This wall can be converted into a charming patio. Modern window and door frames in wall to be removed.
- (2) Dormer opening in West hip roof - modern.
- (3) Chimney, as it will not stand fire inspection. Use of original door frame as a support in the make-shift construction to be removed for use in building.
- (4) Platform over stairway and closet adjoining same.
- (5) Modern beaded ceiling covering floor joists. These joists are original and in splendid condition.

Restoration

- (1) Only original sash is in North opening, west wall, 2nd floor. Sash to match should be fabricated and installed in other openings.
- (2) Large store type windows should be made to conform with character of house.
- (3) First floor door N & S elevations and upper west window should be filled in, as they are modern openings.

Repair

- (1) Window and door frames where necessary.
- (2) Roll asphalt roofing to be replaced with felt roof covered with asbestos shingles. These shingles blend with the house and have a certain amount of character. They are permanent, safer and more economical than wooden shingles.
- (3) Pour 2 inch slab of concrete over present asphalt tile covered concrete ground floor.

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Stabilization

This phase concerns the exterior appearance of the original building. Policy and requirements of the house to determine the final course of action.

- (1) Finish on west wall is original and in first class condition.
- (2) Stucco finish on north wall has been completely removed in mutilating manner.
- (3) Stucco on south wall is modern, and is not bonded to coquina. Original finish remaining under this new stucco is in very poor condition.
- (4) East elevation - this wall has been recently stuccoed. The job was well done and is of permanent nature. To remove this well bonded concrete stucco will likely cause major damage to the house. It would seem that this wall will set the pattern for the exterior finish. Signs will be removed and stucco white-washed.

Alterations

- (1) The removal of the modern lean-to on the west side will require the construction of a bathroom within the house proper. The southwest room, second floor, at present the kitchen, could be so converted. The layout for this room should be done by an architect.

These conclusions were reached after a study of the building, and architectural evidence found within the fabric of the building indicated the alterations. Mr. B. A. Crichlow made measured drawings of the house, both before and after restoration, which drawings have been furnished the Historic American Buildings Survey at request of Professor Henry Edwards. After completion of the restoration work, the building was occupied as a gun shop until its sale by the Saint Augustine Historical Society in 1961 to Mr. and Mrs. Williams, who are using it for the same purpose.

The following is the text of the bronze marker placed on this house:

The Pedro Fornells House

Prior to 1800 this area was part of the Dragoon Barracks land and was used as a kitchen garden for the Spanish troops. Between 1800 and 1807 Pedro Fornells built the house of native coquina rock, and it was occupied by his family until about 1823. The lot extended to Cordova Street, and contained a grove of 196 orange trees. A recent owner, Burton Masters, operated a restaurant in this building for over 30 years.

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Purchased and restored in 1952 by the
Saint Augustine Historical Society (1962)

Note: Research and translations by Mrs. Eugenia B. Arana and
Mrs. Doris Wiles. Copies of Spanish documents cited are in
St. Augustine Historical Society Library."

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest and merit: The Fornells House is a fine example of St. Augustine domestic architecture of the early 19th century.
2. Condition of fabric: Restored (1952-53); well-maintained.

B. Description of exterior:

1. Number of stories: Two.
2. Number of bays: Three bay front x two bays.
3. Over-all dimensions: 27' - 4-3/4" (front) x 29' - 11-1/4"
4. Layout - shape: Rectangular.
5. Foundation: Coquina blocks. (Note: "coquina" is a local shell stone quarried on nearby Anastasia Island and used for construction in St. Augustine since 1580.)
6. Wall construction: Coquina blocks laid in roughly horizontal courses plastered inside, and out.
7. Porches, etc.: None.
8. Openings: Doorways and doors: Two new (restoration) wooden doors; simple masonry openings. Windows and shutters: All windows nine-over-six-light double-hung all replaced at time of restoration, at which time, several former openings were closed and respaced.
9. Chimneys: One new brick chimney (constructed at time of restoration).
10. Roof:

shape and covering: Hipped roof with asbestos shingles.

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Eaves, etc.: Simple box cornice (restoration).

Dormers: None.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

First floor: Two large rooms with enclosed stair.

Second floor: Apartment with hall (three rooms and bath).

2. Stairways: Wooden construction (enclosed first floor; open rail, second floor).

3. Flooring: Concrete on first floor, wooden board flooring (recent) on second floor.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Exterior walls have plaster on masonry; interior partitions have plaster on concrete block and wooden stud. Ceiling in first-floor front room has exposed beams with beaded edge and plaster; on the second floor the ceiling is of tongue-and-groove planks.

5. Doorways and doors: All replaced during restoration.

6. Trim: Simple wooden trim with molded back-band (restoration). Note: Several original door and window frames were found in place at time of restoration.

7. Hardware: None original.

8. Lighting: Electric.

9. Heating: Fireplace and stove.

D. Site:

1. Orientation: House faces east on Spanish Street; Hypolita Street along north elevation.

2. Enclosures: Walled grassed yard on south and west.

3. Landscaping: None.

Architectural data prepared by
Henry C. Edwards, Architect
National Park Service
August 1961